

**March 9, 2010**

**Media Release**

### **March a time to acknowledge female carers**

Monday 8 March marked International Women's Day, signalling a month of activities organised to highlight the varied roles and contributions of women in society. During this time, Carers Australia is calling on all Australians to acknowledge female colleagues, friends and family who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends with a disability, mental illness or disorder, chronic condition, terminal illness or who are frail.

Joan Hughes, Carers Australia CEO said "71% of all primary carers in Australia are female.<sup>1[1]</sup> They are young, of working age, older, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and live in major cities, urban, regional, rural and remote areas.

"Many carers are termed 'sandwich carers or the sandwich generation' because they care for more than one person – a frail parent, a partner or a child with a disability or chronic condition.

"And the majority of these carers are women.

"They make a vital contribution to both the fabric of our communities and the Australian economy.

"As such they deserve our recognition, greater support and understanding. This special day marks a fitting opportunity to acknowledge female carers across Australia for their continued and valuable contribution to society.

"The caring role places many demands on carers' time and financial, psychological, emotional and physical resources."

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Ms Hughes said it was essential that carers learned to look after themselves. If they don't care for themselves, they would eventually exhaust their "caring reserves" which they needed to care for others. She had five helpful tips for female carers:

- If it comes to a choice between your health and your priorities, put your health first.
- Learn to say no. People who care often put themselves last. Start to accept help from others and share the care.
- Take time out for yourself.
- Try and do one or two things a day that make you happy.
- Connect with friends and family and draw on their strength too. Don't be afraid to lean a little, because they wouldn't be there if they didn't offer.

Female carers needing support or assistance can call the Carers Advisory and Information Service on 1800 242 636. This line will take you to the Carer Association in your state or territory.